

Learn the Signs of Stroke and When to Call 9-1-1

(SALT LAKE CITY) – Imagine being on a trip, feeling suddenly sick, and being unable to call out your spouse’s name for help. That was the reality for Utahn Kara Hazen, who was out of town with her husband when her arm went numb and she couldn’t tell him. But he recognized her symptoms as signs of a stroke and called 9-1-1. Paramedics arrived within five minutes and Kara made it to a hospital within the window of time for treatment to be effective. She was lucky—she made a full recovery and goes about her normal life today.

You don’t need to be a medical professional to identify the signs of a stroke. In observance of National Stroke Awareness Month, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) wants all Utahns to know some key things about stroke risk factors, prevention, and how to recognize symptoms.

By knowing the signs and symptoms of stroke and calling 9-1-1 right away, patients can get to a hospital faster. Although stroke is the No. 3 killer in Utah and the nation, Utah’s hospitalization rate for stroke is lower than the national rate, according to UDOH Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program (HDSPP) data. While that may sound good, it actually means that Utahns who suffer strokes are not making it to the hospital in time for life-saving treatment.

“Stroke is a medical emergency that can often be treated if a person reacts in time,” said Barbara Larsen, HDSPP Program Manager. “Once a person shows symptoms, he or she will have a very short window of time to get treatment with special drugs,” she added.

Drugs that dissolve blood clots can be used in patients who suffer certain types of strokes. Dissolving the clots that lead to strokes can lessen the amount of brain damage a victim suffers.

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HDSPP data show that nearly 60 percent of Utahns do not know the signs of stroke and would not call 9-1-1. Signs and symptoms include:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg.
- Sudden confusion, with trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

For more information, visit www.hearhighway.org or call 1-866-88-STROKE.

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